



Legislative Link

A legislative update provided by the United Way of Florida

Foster Youth Helped

Each year, thousands of children leave state dependency care systems because they turn 18 and are no longer eligible for care. Research shows that many of these young adults experience numerous difficulties. Compared to young adults with no exposure to the child welfare system, they are less likely to earn a high school diploma or GED, have lower rates of college attendance, suffer more from mental health problems, have higher rates of involvement with the criminal justice system, and are more likely to have difficulty achieving financial independence, leading to a higher need for public assistance and higher rates of housing instability and homelessness.

On Wednesday, the House passed [CS/SB 1036](#), a bill that will allow young adults to remain in foster care until they are 21 and that will provide greater supports to them when they leave, so they have greater opportunities for better and more productive lives.

The bill creates an option for young adults, who have not achieved permanency before turning 18, to remain in care up to the age of 21 in order to finish high school, earn a GED, pursue postsecondary education, or begin a career. The bill also restructures the Road-To-Independence Program, strengthens the role and authority of foster parents and group home parents, and codifies the concept of normalcy for children in care. Among others, the bill also:

- authorizes young adults in foster care who have not attained permanency before 18 to remain in care until 21 years of age;
- provides eligibility criteria to remain in such extended care, allows such a young adult older than 18 to leave and re-enter care anytime before reaching age 21, and requires residence in supervised living arrangements;
- requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and community-based care lead agencies (CBC lead agencies) to develop transition plans for young adults in extended foster care;
- requires continuation of case management, service delivery, and judicial review for those young adults;
- establishes requirements and expectations for foster parents, group home parents and providers, the DCF, CBC lead agencies, and their providers; and
- requires adequate training and support for foster parents and inclusion of foster parents in a full, equal, and respectful partnership with other participants in the child welfare system.

For additional information, please contact
the United Way of Florida at: (850) 488-8276.

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